

MYTH OR FACT: Answer Sheet

1. **FACT.** Adolescents don't talk to their parents because parents are likely to be judgmental, or angry, even though their teen is reaching out to them for understanding and support. According to the 2002 "National Survey of Adolescents and Young Adults: Sexual Health Knowledge, Attitudes, and Experiences," by the Kaiser Family, 64% of teens said that they would not talk to their parents about sexual health issues.
2. **MYTH.** Even without the constraint of a parent present at an appointment, some adolescents are uncomfortable talking with their health care providers about issues they see as "personal" or "none of their business." 79% reported having felt judged or looked down upon by their health care provider. Many teens are also unaware of their rights to confidentiality, a subject that providers need to emphasize early on. In Wisconsin, a minor can receive contraceptive care and counseling, STI testing and treatment, emergency contraception, pregnancy testing and options counseling without parental consent.
3. **FACT.** Boys are interested in sexual health issues such as reproduction, contraception and abortion, but often sorely lack practical knowledge about these issues – leaving, as a result, all the responsibility of reproductive care and contraception to their female partner. 42% of boys want to know about the different types of birth control that are available. 32% want to know where to get birth control.
4. **FACT.** Adolescents are particularly concerned with what their partner thinks of them. According to the Kaiser Family 2002 survey, 81% of teens are very self-conscious about how their partner views them. Furthermore, adolescent females seem not to necessarily view their (male, in this example) partners as resources and confidantes for reproductive and sexual health. Nearly 2 in 5 young adults and 8% of adolescents reported that they or their partner had been pregnant; but this group consisted of twice as many females as males – revealing that some females are not comfortable telling their partners that they have faced a pregnancy.
5. **FACT.** Because of the lack of open discussions regarding sex and sexual health between teens, parents, health care providers and educators, many teens enter the provider's office with the expectation that their provider will disapprove of them and their behavior – an assumption often inadvertently proved right by health care providers, who may not realize how their body language or phrasing is supporting the taboo of teen sex.

6. **MYTH.** Teens seem to understand that alcohol and drug use can play a large (and dangerous) role in sexual advancement; in some cases, they may assume that the relationship between alcohol and sex is appropriate and normal. According to the Kaiser Family report, 4 out of 5 adolescents believe that teens their age usually drink or take drugs before having sex. Almost a third of young adults have “done more” sexually while under the influence of alcohol or drugs than they had planned when they were sober.
7. **MYTH.** Adolescents say that they would prefer *not* to know their health care provider well outside of the medical context because they feel the familiarity makes it more difficult to speak honestly and to get the care they need. 69% of teens feel somewhat comfortable talking to their health care provider about sex and relationships.
8. **MYTH.** Most teens wait until after the fact to let their parents know – if they let the parents know. They are afraid that their parent would not listen, support them or understand and that they would influence their decision to have sex.
9. **MYTH.** Although 9 out of 10 adolescents say that using condoms is a sign of respect, caring and responsibility, half of teens surveyed said bringing up the subject of condoms can lead to suspicions regarding their own sexual history and can imply that they are suspicious of their partner’s sexual history. Furthermore, more than a third of adolescents surveyed in the Kaiser report said that buying condoms was “embarrassing” and a similar number said that it was hard to “bring up” condoms.
10. **FACT.** Some teenagers are very afraid to find out if they have STI’s. Many teens do not know that they can receive treatment without their parent’s notification, one possible deterrent, and/or they feel isolated by the stigma attached to STI’s, and feel that they have no one in whom to confide.